CLAIMS

1. A computer-implemented method of developing digital media content, comprising:

(a) providing a user interface to a digital device network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users in a collaborative community to create a digital media artifact;

(b) establishing a deadline for user contributions to the online digital media artifact; and

(c) submitting collaborative user contributions to the online digital media artifact received prior to the deadline for production by a third party into a final media product.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said third party is part of the collaborative community that participated in the creation of the digital media artifact.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein said third party is not part of the collaborative community that participated in the creation of the digital media artifact.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein only the most popular user contributions, as determined by explicit or implicit voting by community members, are submitted for production.

5. The method of claim1, wherein popularity of a user contribution to the collaborative media artifact is determined implicitly by tracking viewing and/or use of the contribution by other users in the collaborative community.

6. The method of claim1, wherein popularity of a user contribution to the collaborative media artifact is determined explicitly by tracking the assignment of a quality rating to the contribution by other users in the collaborative community.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the media product is one or more of an animation, television program, song, motion picture or commercial.

8.   The method of claim 1, wherein the media product is a special edition product.

9.   The method of claim 1, wherein the user contributions include one or more of plots, characters, settings, situations, sound clips, drawings, artwork, and

5   video clips.

10.   The method of claim 1, wherein the user contributions are based on materials from a fixed-asset database.

11.   The method of claim 1, wherein the user contributions include contributions to a working material asset database available to other members of the

10   community.

12.   The method of claim 1, wherein user contributions to a collaborative digital media artifact are tracked.

13.   The method of claim 12, wherein modification history and percentage of contribution from multiple parties to the collaborative digital media artifact is

15   graphically displayed.

14.   The method of claim 1, wherein the users in the online collaborative community provide identity information in a user profile viewable by other members of the community.

15.   The method of claim 14, wherein user activity in the online

20   collaborative community is tracked.

16.   The method of claim 15, wherein user activity is correlated with user profile data to determine demographic information indicative of user preferences.

17.   The method of claim 1, further comprising providing an interface to a digital device network, said interface configured to enable a user to view a plurality

25   of digital media artifacts collaboratively created by members of the online

collaborative community, and to select from among the plurality of artifacts, one or more artifacts to modify.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the interface configured to enable a user to view a plurality of digital media artifacts collaboratively created by members of the online collaborative community uses statistical sampling to select the plurality of artifacts presented to the user from among a larger plurality of digital media artifacts collaboratively created by members of the online collaborative community.

19. A computer-implemented method of developing digital media content, comprising:

providing a user interface via a digital device network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users to create a digital media artifact.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising submitting collaborative user contributions to the online digital media artifact for production by a third party into a final media product.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising selecting and combining a subset of the collaborative contributions to the media artifact into a final media product.

22. A computer-implemented method of developing digital media content, comprising:

(a) providing a user interface to a digital device network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users to the creation of a plurality of digital media artifacts;

(b) establishing a deadline for user contributions to the online digital media artifacts; and

(c) assembling the collaborative user contributions received for each of the plurality of media artifacts prior to the deadline into a final media product.

23.   A computer-supported system for developing digital media content, said system comprising:

5   (a) a network of digital devices configured to run software providing a user interface to the digital computer network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users to create a digital media artifact; and

(b) a media production capability;

10   wherein said system is operated to submit collaborative user contributions made to the online digital media artifact prior to an established deadline for production into a final media product.

24.   The system of claim 23, wherein said network of digital devices comprises:

15   one or more clients running front-end software, said software providing a user interface to the digital computer network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users to create a digital media artifact;

one or more servers running back-end software, said software
20   configured to interface with the front-end software to coordinate the contributions of a plurality of users;

one or more databases configured for storage of digital media and associated information; and

application program interfaces (APIs) and middleware (server-side
25   software components) configured to communicate between the one or more clients, servers and databases.

25.   The system of claim 23, wherein said digital device network comprises one or more of personal computers, interactive television devices, cable boxes, and cable modems.

26.   The system of claim 25, wherein said digital device network further comprises one or more of wireless devices, cellular telephones and personal digital assistants.

27.   A computer-supported system for developing digital media content, said system comprising:

a network of digital devices configured to run software providing a user interface to the digital computer network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users to create a digital media artifact.

28.   A computer program product comprising a computer-usable medium having computer-readable program code embodied thereon relating to providing a computer-supported system for developing digital media content, the computer-readable program code effecting the following step within a computing system:

(a) providing a user interface to a digital device network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users to create a digital media artifact;

(b) establishing a deadline for user contributions to the online digital media artifact; and

(c) submitting collaborative user contributions to the online digital media artifact received prior to the deadline for production into a final media product.

29.   A computer program product comprising a computer-usable medium having computer-readable program code embodied thereon relating to providing a computer-supported system for developing digital media content, the computer-readable program code effecting the following step within a computing system:

providing a user interface to a digital device network, said interface configured to enable a user to contribute collaboratively online with other users to create a digital media artifact.

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